



SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD

MAY BE AT RISK

- Your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night.
- You find pornography on your child's computer.
- Your child turns the computer monitor off quickly or changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.
- Your child receives mail, gifts, packages, or phone calls from people that you do not know, or your child is making phone calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers that you do not recognize.
- Your child is using an online account that belongs to someone else.
- Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.

Internet Safety Tips for Parents



Office of Plymouth County
District Attorney

Timothy J. Cruz

32 Belmont Street
P.O. Box 1665
Brockton, MA 02303
Phone: 508-584-8120
Fax: 508-586-3578
www.state.ma.us/da/plymouth

INTERNET SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS



Timothy J. Cruz

District Attorney
Plymouth County
www.state.ma.us/da/plymouth





As parents in today's society, we need to be extra vigilant and caring when it comes to the welfare of our children. As a father, I know how exciting it is for children to get on a computer and surf the web, or chat with their friends.

The Internet was designed to provide access to useful resources and information in the comfort of our own homes, but unfortunately it comes with a dark side that a lot of parents are unaware of. It enables sexual predators into our homes to commit a new high tech crime called "Internet Luring".

In recent years, the criminal justice community has begun to gather statistics on this new crime. A study conducted in 2000 for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children showed that 1 in 5 children have been contacted sexually over the Internet. 3% of those that responded had been solicited aggressively with offers of travel, money or gifts. Three-quarters of these children did not tell their parents for fear that they would lose their Internet privileges.

"Internet Luring" is a difficult crime for police to solve. It appears that the child may have run away. Often there is little physical evidence left at the scene, and few, if any witnesses. The law enforcement and legal community has come to realize that we alone cannot protect our children. That is why I took the initiative to have Plymouth County designated as a Pilot Site for the international launch of the "Missing" project.

This project has been made available to every school system in Plymouth County in an effort to educate our children of the potential dangers associated with the use of the internet. If you would like more information regarding this project or other resources in my office, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Cruz,
Plymouth County District Attorney

Talk to Your Kids

- **Be an involved Parent.** Let your children know that they can talk to you about anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable. Remember, how you respond will determine whether they confide in you the next time they encounter a problem.
- **Tell your children not to respond when someone offers them something for nothing, such as free software, gifts and money.** Tell them to never give out any information about themselves or their family.
- **Remind your children that the people they chat with are still strangers and to bear in mind that people may not be who they seem.** It is easy for an adult to pretend he/she is a kid.

Set Rules

- **Set reasonable rules and guidelines for your children before they venture out on the Internet.** Discuss these rules and post them near the computer as a reminder.
- **Work together to decide what is and is not appropriate.** Try to enlist the children's cooperation and self-regulation wherever possible. Tell your child to never respond to threatening or obscene messages.
- **Discuss software and web sites with your children.** Also read the "Video Game Report Card: on the National Institute on Media and the Family's Web site: <http://www.mediaandthefamily.org>
- **Make Internet use a family activity.** Consider keeping the computer in the family room rather than the child's bedroom. Monitor your child's online activity just as you would the shows that they watch on T.V. or the games they play, or the movies they see.

Never

- **Never allow your child to arrange a face-to face meeting with another person without Parental permission.** If a meeting is arranged, please be sure to accompany your child.
- **Never use your child's name or E-mail address in any public directories or profiles, particularly, school directories.**
- **Never click on links that are contained in e-mails from persons they do not know.** Such links could lead to sexually explicit or otherwise inappropriate web sites.
- **Never post photographs of your child on web forums that are available to the public.**

What Can You Do?

- **Getting online yourself will alert you to any potential problem that your children may incur while on the Internet.**
- **If you become aware of the transmission, use or viewing of child pornography while online, immediately notify the police, contact the District Attorney's Office or report it to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline at 1-800-843-5678 or the website www.missingkids.com/cybertip.**
- **Ask your Internet Service Provider (ISP) whether they offer filtering services to families with young children.** If not check out filtering software that you can purchase for a modest cost.
- **Ask your ISP about their privacy policy and exercise your options for how your personal information will be used.**
- **If your child receives a message that is harassing or threatening of a sexual nature, forward a copy to your ISP and ask for assistance; Also contact your local police or District Attorney's Office.**